

## **Communication Highway and the safe delivery of the Buddha Message**

Three speakers were scheduled to talk on the occasion of the inauguration of the Free E mail Server on April 21, 1999.

Professor Bhikkhu Dhammavihari opening the session, spoke in English and made the following observations. He started on a humorous note, commenting that it was too late in life for him to master all technicalities about computers and plunge into the communication highway. But he was old enough to offer advice to the younger, specially to those who would take to the field with an interest in Buddhism.

Already with the experience he now has, operating two websites on Buddhism via USA, he sees the vast potential before Sri Lankan scholars, specially for those with a seriousness of purpose, not only to make a vital contribution outward, by offering to the world the wealth of Buddhist Information they need, but also get a rewarding feedback from the pool of world knowledge.

He indicated that in his own way, he is operating at the moment in several areas. Now that we have put the Pali Tipitaka on the internet, he indicated the possibility of detecting textual errors which have crept in to our accepted versions, in almost all editions like the Buddha Jayanti of Sri Lanka, the PTS of England and the Chatta Sangayana of Myanmar. The seriousness of these errors vary, from simple to very grave, but ultimately they are errors all the same which need to be corrected. The text now being available to more people, both on the internet and the CD, the matter needs both urgency and serious attention.

The area of translation is even more serious. We are very generously trying to get on the CD some of the so-called standard translations which are copyright

free. This certainly is going to be of very great assistance to many who wish to study the Dhamma via the originals.

But we who have seen a fairly large number of serious translation errors, feel the need to put up warnings about such errors and offer corrections without any further delays.

Some of us working together, including a few European monks living in Australia, have already embarked on such a project for some of the seriously major errors in the translations of the Digha Nikaya by both Rhys Davids and Maurice Walshe, their translations being separated from each other by a long interval of more than eighty years. Some of these translations, no doubt, are hailed as being marvellously good.

The third area can be described as being worse than computer viruses. They are completely destructive and devastating. These are in the area of interpretation of Buddhism via websites. The television is also extensively used for this. This is where lots of amateurs start playing around. But even men of professorial standing now seem to indulge in this game. They very generously offer their services to the long-dead [*cira-parinibbuto*] Buddha to help him to prove some of his 'scientifically unproven' theories about rebirth etc. So they have recourse to hypnosis and other modern media to present Buddhism to the world in what they believe are plausible and convincing modes.

He pleaded for the meaningful use of the electronic media, both our websites and the E mail server, for the propagation of the word of the Buddha for the sake of greater sanity and stability in the human community and for peace on earth and good will among men.